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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: MANDALAY NLD COFFERS EMPTY, USDA STRIVING TO
CREATE "NLD-FREE" VILLAGES

Classified By: Classified by COM, Carmen Martinez - Reason 1.4 (b)

11. (C) Emboffs met March 8 in Mandalay with members of the National League for Democracy's Mandalay Division executive committee. In a wide-ranging discussion, the NLD leaders updated us on harassment party members receive from police and the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA), the regime's mass membership organization. As the USDA often provides purposefully misleading, negative information to the police and others regarding NLD activities, "things are worse than before," according to the NLD leaders.

12. (S) The Mandalay NLD leadership includes two individuals who were with Aung San Suu Kyi's convoy when it was attacked on May 30, 2003. One of the two has regained nearly full use of her arms and hands after suffering multiple fractures during the assault by USDA thugs on the convoy. Emboffs could not help but note the massive scaring and physical distortions that remain. When we asked who they thought was responsible for directing the May 30, 2003 attack on the NLD convoy, the Mandalay NLD was unanimous in naming General Soe Win, subsequently promoted by the regime to prime minister.

13. (C) The NLD executives said the USDA is seeking to create "NLD-free villages" to help the regime sweep the expected upcoming constitutional referendum. The well-funded USDA offers consumer products like soap and blankets to villages that have no registered NLD members. The Mandalay NLD, in contrast, gets no financial help from the cash-strapped NLD national HQ in Rangoon. To support the party's meager health care, education, prisoner support, and other social welfare programs in Mandalay Division, a province larger in size than Maryland and with a population of over 6.4 million, the NLD last year spent about \$550, all raised locally. In addition, the NLD has struggled to pay rent on the party's padlocked office building since it was ordered closed by the GOB in 2003; the NLD will let the lease lapse in May. That the party's fortunes have fallen so low in Mandalay Division, a province in which the NLD won 55 out of 56 seats in the 1990 elections, is shocking and indicates the need for friends of Burma's pro-democracy movement to move quickly to provide financial and other assistance to the beleaguered NLD.

Martinez